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ABSTRACT

Recent legislation on adult basic education (ABE) in the Netherlands has two important aims: to offer one uniform organizational financial structure and to improve educational quality. ABE institutes have concentrated on restructuring the organization and merging the precursors. The change in structure is supported by a change in organizational culture with a focus on substance and innovation. A review of the social construction and reconstruction of school culture distinguishes at least three domains: the functioning of the principal; the nature and degree of goal consensus; and the nature of professional relations in the team. A study examined current practices in 17 institutes for ABE. The research instruments used were indepth interviews, document analysis, and observations. The new principal was found to play a crucial role in bringing together the precursors and in introducing and implementing curricular innovations. Some principals had a "second" leader in the form of dual management. The nature of the courses offered by the institute had an impact on goal consensus. Most institutes offered a broad range of courses for various target groups. Problems in fostering professional cooperation were lack of contact among teachers and failure to involve teachers in policy matters and issues concerning course content. (16 references) (YLB)

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ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION IN THE NETHERLANDS

Paper for the Annual Meeting of the
American Education and Research Association,
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drs M.J.M. van den Berg

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1. Introduction*

Legislation of Adult Basic Education (ABE) was founded in the Netherlands in 1987. In short, ABE refers to knowledge, skills and attitudes which adults need to acquire in order to function adequately in the social roles they have in modern society. These roles are relevant at home, at work and in political participation for example (Atter, 1990). ABE is the lowest level in Adult Education and it is intended for adults in socially and educationally deprived circumstances. It consists of literacy courses; Dutch as a second language; refreshment courses in Dutch; courses in mathematics and in social skills; orientation in English and in computers and vocational orientation.

The rule on ABE aimed at new educational organizations substituting different independent projects. These former independent projects, the so-called precursors of ABE, varied considerably in several aspects.

In this paper the influence of organizational culture(s) in shaping new institutes for Adult Basic Education is examined. Current practices in seventeen institutes for ABE form the basis of this study. The research instruments used are in-depth interviews, document analysis and observations.

2. Adult Basic Education in the Netherlands

The Adult Education Framework Act as initiated in 1981 and passed in 1985 offers an integrating framework for already existing regulations. As the legislative process took longer than expected by 1983 the problem arose that some developmental projects in Adult Education (that had been started in 1980) may end without any follow-up. In view of this a governmental rule on Adult Basic Education was proposed at the end of 1983. By focussing on this subsection of Adult Education, the complexity of the legislative task was reduced. Nevertheless, compromises had yet to be found. Not only the developmental projects at local and regional levels such as the Literacy Projects, the Educational Projects for Cultural Minorities and the Open School Projects, had to fit in the new rule, some

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other forms of Adult Education had to merge in the new Adult Basic Education as well. In the summer of 1986 the rule on ABE was laid down.

This rule has two important aims. The first aim was to offer one uniform organizational and financial structure. The second aim was to improve the educational quality, both by governmental and local efforts.

As a consequence of the first aim, all municipalities had to indicate which institutes were (or institute was) to provide ABE for their residents by August 1987. Although the foundation of one institute for one municipality or a group of co-operating municipalities was not statutory obliged, normally municipalities made the precursors of ABE merge in new educational organizations. It must be stressed that these precursors should be interpreted as distinct from the notion of 'early adopters' in studies on innovation.

These institutes have to meet several requirements as formulated in the rule on ABE. A plan of courses for each year and an annual report have to be constructed. Courses have to be given in groups and participation is tied to a maximum. Teachers have to be qualified, competent and must have a uniform legal standing. Finally, the activities in the institute have to be sufficiently coordinated. Therefore, in other words, a principal has to be appointed.

The financial basis of each institute is determined by specified characteristics of the adult population in each municipality in each calendar year. On the basis of about $8 per participant per hour, with an average group size of eight and a 40 week programme, this budget is converted into a certain amount of participant-contacthours per municipality.

In respect of the improvement of the educational quality, i.e. the second aim of the rule on ABE, standards are less. Central government is not entitled to specific pedagogical prescriptions, but is allowed to impose certain conditions. For instance, the institutes are obliged to produce written guidelines to explain how the institute is promoting ongoing professionalization of the teachers. Also, they have to set out how the contents of ABE are connected and how internal and external flows of participants are stimulated. The institutes themselves are responsible for the way they progress on these innovations and they have to indicate the importance of their activities. A key factor for educational quality is a cooperating team. On this, consensus can be observed in the literature in ABE.

In summary, ABE is a large-scale educational innovation. It consists of a broad range of innovations at classroom level and school level, initiated and imposed by the national government (Van den Berg & Vandenberghe, 1984). The somewhat flexible new margins offer prospects of local experiments, but the financial boundaries induce uncertainty and caution.

Resistance to change was only to be expected and solutions had to be found to several problems. Dalin (1978) distinguishes normative conflicts, power conflicts, practical conflicts and psychological conflicts. These four types are recognizable in ABE. For example, which objectives will be central in the new institute? Who will be the principal and who will be participating in decision making? Does the merger imply a physical move into a new building for all courses? Do teachers have to be retrained for parts of the ABE they are not acquainted with?

In the past few years most institutes for ABE have concentrated on restructuring the organization, and on merging the precursors concerned if relevant. In 1990 approximately 260 institutes were offering courses in ABE (Ronner, 1990). This formation of new institutes for ABE has a certain potential of structural conformity (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) instead of substantial changes in team-functioning and in curricular content. Old structures may be untouched and stay unchanged in an umbrella organization, whatever has been documented in terms of policies. In order to arrive at a team of teachers who cooperate well and for innovative capacities, a new organizational structure is necessary but not enough. The new structure has to be supported, 'carried' by an organizational culture and both have to exceed the structures and cultures of the constituting parts of the organization.

In order to describe and to understand the current situation in ABE one has to be aware of the starting position at the introduction of the rule on ABE: the situation in the precursor projects. These previous independent projects participating in the process were different within several characteristics. These differences are concerned with professionalism, organizational structure and teaching style for adult learners of different target groups and achievement levels.

With regard to professionalism, projects working with volunteers, with freelancers and paid educators with a legal standing were distinguished as precursors. For example, an implication of the ABE rule is that former coordinating staff-members in precursors with a legal standing became teachers (educational workers), whilst their experienced volunteers had to leave or got only a small appointment for a few hours a week.

Concerning the organizational structure, there are both precursor projects with a horizontal structure (indicated by collective decision making and the absence of a formal project leader) and projects with a more vertical structure. Under the new act, people that were used to different structures came together within one new institute, with one principal and a team of teachers.
As for teaching style and target groups of native and non-native speakers, some projects aimed more at compensation and schooling and others aimed more at emancipation and social awareness in a broader sense. Some target groups of the precursors did not fit into the target group as defined by the rule on ABE, and new target groups had to be stimulated to participate. The demand for professional qualified teachers working with a group, conflicted with the practice in literacy-courses of one-to-one teaching by volunteers. The demand for an average group-size of eight adults made it financially difficult to maintain teamteaching (with two teachers in one group at the same time), as in the former Open School. Also, the background of the teachers varied: there are former schoolteachers, youth-workers, social and cultural workers, and people with no specific vocational training.

In the section above, a description is given of the rule on ABE and of the changes that the precursors of ABE are confronted with, in shaping a new organization, team and curriculum. It is assumed that a change in structure has to be supported by a change in organizational culture in order to be substantial and offering innovative capacities. Therefore, in this study the shaping of new institutes for ABE is examined from a cultural perspective. Ongoing innovations in the institutes are relevant inherently. In operationalizing schoolculture the innovative capacities make up an underlying theme. Thus, a school's culture will be examined as it was constructed during the past few years and at the same time in a meaningful way with a view to the future. Research questions are:

- How can institutes for ABE be distinguished and typified by their culture?
- What role do the organizational cultures of the constituting parts play in the change-process of shaping new institutes for Adult Basic Education?

3. The concept of culture

Culture consists of the knowledge, habits, beliefs, norms and expectations in a group of people. Social structure consists of the patterns and arrangements in this group. Culture and structure are interrelated and both are socially constructed and open to change. A new structure can be imposed in an innovation, but a change in culture takes longer.
Normally one is unaware of a school's culture. When innovations are being introduced it manifests more. The existing culture is being confronted with the culture of the innovation and one becomes conscious of the underlying patterns of norms, values and expectations. The existing culture can be a support as well as an obstruction for renewal and it can modify the results (Staessens, 1990, 49).
As for ABE, one has to be aware of a 'double' confrontation: the culture of the innovation does not come into contact with **the** existing culture, but with the cultures of the precursors. Holly c.s. (1987, 171) stress that "a school's culture is not a uni-dimensional one but rather some type of rich mixture of views, values, and norms. Certainly, this fact is not new, but it is something that is often forgotten. (...) Successful innovation and institutionalization may be more a function of matching an innovation to the cultural perspectives within a school than to accomplishing any actual change." In ABE there is a matching of innovation to a mixture of perspectives and similarly a mutual adaption of these cultural perspectives (of the precursors involved) that is taking place.

In studying the social construction and reconstruction of school culture one can distinguish at least three domains: the functioning of the principal, the nature and degree of goal consensus and the nature of professional relations in the team (Staessens, 1990, 32-51).

3.1. The principal

In schools the principal appears to be an outstanding change-agent. An effective introduction of an innovation to the team by the principal presupposes that the principal is a central agent of what is seen as important in the school. In matching old to new, it is important that the principal herself (or himself) has a clear vision and that she (or he) communicates this vision to the team.

In studies on school effectiveness academic leadership (a principal stressing pedagogic-didactic issues) is related to high student achievement and innovative capacity of the school (Van de Grift, 1987). Does this finding maintain its validity in new-formed educational organizations for adults? Especially in a turbulent institutional context, administrative and managerial capacities of the principal and the governing body are fundamental (Van Wieringen, 1988). In institutes for ABE survival of the institute by running courses can be a main concern. A principal that is competent to managing this is a condition for any educational processes.
Another point of attention, is that sometimes in one institute two principals do make an allocation of tasks. The way they co-operate and their interactions with the team is relevant for locating change-agents.

3.2. Goal consensus

Goal-consensus in organizations and innovative capacity are found to be interrelated. The process of team-building in ABE should imply that the formulation of goals exceed the goals of the constituent parts of the team. The recent history of ABE and differences between its precursors raise the possibility of conflicting subcultures and survival of precursors in these subcultures.
A strong degree of cultural segmentation is related negatively to the innovative capacity of organizations. This does not imply that goals and culture should be homogeneous in order to be effective. Differing philosophies can lead to permanent reflection on basic values, goals and priorities in the team. In more turbulent contexts heterogeneity may even be more important than homogeneity (Soeters, 1988).
In studying the core mission of a school, there are three important aspects to consider:

- the nature, content and direction of goals;
- the dissemination of goals in the team and the character of possible subcultures; and
- the penetration and motivating power of culture to the team.

3.3. Professional relations

In order to have a team that carries a certain culture it is necessary to intensify contacts, interactions and shared experiences of group members. A teacher is generally used to or expected to be his own master in deciding on instructional strategies and related issues. Professional communication and cooperation, as promoting factors in innovations, conflict with this autonomy of teachers. In order to change for the better, and to promote a self-renewal capacity of schools, one has to provide tools for team-coherence. By strong communication and cooperation teachers clarify what is important in an innovation for their school practice.
The rule on ABE promotes professional cooperation in a team-structure, but the time available is shorter compared with practices in several precursors of ABE. Often, teachers who practice teamteaching in the same group of adults made their preparations for the next stages in the course together. In Literacy Projects the aim of team meetings was to promote the expertise of volunteers. In Open School-projects a central aspect of this meetings was a continuous confrontation of theoretical insights and classroom practice. It is expected that in ABE cooperation and communication will be continued and modified.

4. Instruments

The instruments for data-collection that have been used in this study are in-depth interviews, document-analysis and observations.

4.1. In-depth interviews

The interview-guidelines I used for measuring school culture are to a large extent similar to the ones Staessens and Vandenberghe developed for teachers and principals in primary schools (Staessens & Vandenberghe, 1988a, 1988b). The use of an existing research-instrument within a new educational context and with different changes involved offers insight in the broader possibilities of the instrument and the value of the theoretical basis. Several aspects of ABE are worth studying in relation to the concept of school culture, as indicated in the foregoing section.

The interviews are intended to collect information on the subjective views of the members of the organization. They start with an introduction and asking for permission to tape the interview. The items cover formal and informal contacts in the team, potential conflicts, goals of the institute and the functioning of the principal and (if relevant) other leaders.
With regard to innovations, questions concentrated on changes in the school after the introduction of ABE and on a comparison of the state of affairs now and the ways things were in the precursors. In view of the nature of the innovation, items on this are less specified compared with the corresponding section in the original interview-guidelines.

4.2. Document analysis

Document analysis concentrated on getting an overview of central themes in the past few years of the organizations and on changes during the last three years. Data-collection by document analysis offers additional objective information. For instance, this information may be on the backgrounds of changes in the constitution of the team (such as a principal that has been replaced).
Important documents are meeting reports of the team and the governing body of the school, working plans and evaluating reports.

4.3. Observations

The attendance of a team meeting has two important functions: it offers an introduction of the researcher to the whole team and it gives another insight into the way the team operates. Classroom observations concern themselves with another part of this study, but they imply an intensive contact with a teacher. After the observed lesson the course is being analysed with the teacher concerned and the interview on school culture was held afterwards or during the same week.

5. Data

At the outset twenty-one case studies were planned. Twenty-five institutes for ABE were asked to participate and seventeen agreed. Eight institutes operate at a local level and nine are working in regions of two to seven municipalities. Budgets range from $ 15,000 to over $ 500,000. Staff establishments range from thirteen working hours a week to five hundred hours a week (i.e. less than one full time equivalent to more than thirteen full time equivalents). The number of teachers and principals ranges from three to twenty-five, volunteers excluded.

Each institute was visited for an introductory talk after the initial agreement to participate. The actual research activities took about a week per institute. If necessary a second or a third researcher was present in the institute within the same week.

Most teachers were met in three formal settings: in the team meeting, during classroom-observation and in the interview. Interviews about school culture were held with four to 17 persons per institute, with an average of eight and a mode of six interviewees. Teachers, principals and where possible volunteers have been interviewed.

In this multiple case-study, the interviews and notes were to be prepared for a within-site analysis and a cross-site analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Yin, 1984). The transcription of the tapes and notes with a word processor were mostly made by the interviewer. Labels were attached to fragments by one person, according to the themes in the guideline. The questions and referring or recapitulating remarks by the interviewer facilitated this labelling. Sometimes a fragment relevant for two labels was placed under both labels in a second draft of the transcribed interview, with a reference to the related label. For example, a question on informal ways of contact in the team responded by "No, we do not meet like that any more because time is short, but we did in the past, before the rule on ABE was introduced", is relevant for the labels "informal ways of contact" and "changes compared with the precursor(s)."

Per institute the fragments with the same label were rearranged under that label. These labels with collected interview fragments made up the basic texts about school culture and further data processing resulted in 17 sheets with the essential characteristics of each case.

6. Results

Adult Basic Education is different from primary education as we observe when entering schools of both kinds. These differences are expected to be reflected in the school's culture. In analyzing the 17 cases in ABE, to begin with I used existing metaphors about school culture. Staessens succeeded in typifying the culture of nine elementary schools with three metaphors for each indicator: the principal as a father, an architect or a dummy; goal consensus on survival, on a mission or drifting about; and contacts in the team as in a brass-band, a soccer-team or as grains of sand (Staessens, 1990). It must be stressed that these metaphors were not intended as ideal types in the Weberian sense, but as descriptions offering a deeper understanding of nine schools' cultures handling a renewal. This involves restrictions for analysis. Notwithstanding this, each metaphor consists of a meaningful set of characteristics, which can be applied in a new case.

For example, a principal typified as an architect puts more emphasis on formal and non-personal contact as a principal to a teacher. He is not neglecting or avoiding conflicts but surmounts them in favour of the work. He stresses pedagogic-didactic issues in contacts with the team and pays less attention to personal circumstances of teachers, unless they are relevant in respect of their functioning as a teacher. He has much knowledge about teachers' competencies and is expecting teachers to be autonomous in an dynamic and open atmosphere. The team as a whole is perceived as responsible for the future of the school and for the consultation and cooperation needed for this purpose. The principal himself is an important pivot in communication in the team, he is always present and articulates a clear vision.

A principal typified as a father puts more emphasis on informal and personal contacts as a good colleague. He has difficulties in handling conflicts but is good at social and organizational aspects. He expects teachers to be autonomous in their work because of their expertise. He wants the teachers to contribute to an informal atmosphere in the team. The principal himself is important as a contributor to this atmosphere and as an image of the school in public.

A principal typified as a dummy has got merely conflictuous or no contacts with teachers. At the most he is stressing administrative tasks, resulting from a negative choice: he is not good at performing tasks in the pedagogic or the organizational sphere. He is weak in decision making. He

expects teachers to be autonomous without due consideration. He has no visible importance for teachers and neither for the outside public.
Analogous to this set of characteristics concerning these three types of principals, the metaphors on goal consensus and professional relations were also described.

It appeared to be a difficult task to typify the state of the art of the 17 cases by referring to these metaphors. Several principals resemble the architect type or are more like the dummy type, but also several principals show characteristics of more than one type.
For example, one of the 17 principal puts an emphasis on informal and personal contacts as a good colleague. The frequency and the intensity of these contacts vary for each teacher and volunteer, but all are positive. The principal is careful in claims on team members. One teacher says: "She wants you to put in time over the hours you are paid for, but she herself puts in most, so there you go again. (...) If there is a telephone-call sunday in the evening, my children know it is consultation time before answering the phone." Another teacher says: "She knows its a hard time for me at home now and she is satisfied because I am doing the best I can." This principal pays attention to conflicts in the team adequately. She stresses spreading the courses in all villages the municipality consists of. She herself is leading the way in this, but at the same time she stresses common responsibility by transmitting her experiences and giving over responsibilities. She knows a lot on what is going on in the courses by informal observation and talks, but she has no surplus on pedagogic didactic knowledge. She articulates her vision on the future of the institute and she is an important pivot in communication in the team and in contacts with outsiders. This principal is clearly not a dummy principal, but she's no clear architect and no clear father type (nor a mother type).
In other cases the principal belonged to one of the larger precursors. The acceptance of the old colleagues has to be maintained and the acceptance by the new ones has to be gained. This is possibly generating feelings of loss, on the one hand, and experiencing intolerable interventions on the other. This is illustrated by one case in which a part of the new team sees the principal still as a member of the team (father-type) and another part sees her as an outsider (dummy-type), while she herself aims at delegating team management to a vice-principal (who's job description resembles the characteristics of the architect-type).

In typifying goal consensus and professional relations in the team and in trying to make an overall typification for every case, I encountered similar problems. These problems are an indirect proof that school culture in Adult Basic Education is different from primary education. Which factors are relevant to these differences and could be of use in elaborating organizational culture in ABE?

First, the initial novelty of ABE is an important aspect. The data indicates that the change to a new organizational structure is ongoing. In some institutes one only recently found out, that certain arrangements in the team are not taken for granted by new teachers, such as meetings at eleven o'clock in the evening.

Output controlled financing is a second important factor. The need for participant-contacthours to be made forces the institutes to expand the range of courses. This leaves little space for reflection about the quality of the courses offered. Thinking about the most important target-groups and making choices can be observed when the financial basis of the institute is reduced (because of relatively well-provided precursors and the governmental policy of smoothing out differences in budgets for ABE). Amongst others as an effect of this, several teams both with a clear core mission and aiming at survival can be observed.

In the next part of this section some specific topics in ABE will more fully illustrate the collected data.

6.1. The principal

The new principal can play a crucial role in bringing together the precursors and in introducing and implementing curricular innovations, but only a few are very powerful. A combination of external and internal factors, and radical changes at the start of ABE (and mere good luck) seem to be the main characteristics of success. Introspection on the quality of the courses offered is rather a luxurious position. Some principals explicitly aim for this after settling organizational issues and extra tasks such as giving publicity to the institute.

Several principals still have to master their new role. Some seek the aid of central members of the team, others talk about policy-matters to teachers who like to participate in those matters (or even wanted to be a principal themselves). Sometimes an informal leader for a part of the team can be seen.

A formalized way of second leadership is two-headed management. As mentioned in section 3.1, the phenomenon of two (or more) principals making an allocation of tasks is much in evidence in ABE. Examining the data on this topic, two-headed management can be subdivided into three types.

The first type consists of two-headed management in order to pacify the precursors. This appears to be successful if both principals make a clear allocation of tasks in accordance with their expertise, and by this forcing the teachers to contact both principals. In smaller institutes this two-headed management may be an interim structure where a naturally emerging leader may be anticipated.

The second type of two-headed management is of a supplementary principal next to the first one. This structure may originate from a one-head management short of time and/or competence. Teachers orientate most on the one principal in charge of course contents.

The third type consists of a formal superior occupied in other parts of a comprehensive institute and one or more vice-principals actually responsible for all management tasks in ABE. Mostly the formal superior can afford to be an outsider. However, in one case he is declining responsibility to a incapable figurehead. Teachers are referred to the vice-principal who merely promises to research matters.

6.2. Goal consensus

The nature of the courses on offer within each institute seem to have an impact on goal consensus. Most institutes offer a broad range of courses for various target groups.

In one institute the most important goal of the institute is frequently formulated as "the interest of the participants" and "the participant is our first concern." At a first glance, this could be interpreted as a core mission, but in their views on bringing this "interest of the participants" into practice, considerable differences between teachers appear. For example, some of them stress the importance of one-to-one teaching in order to meet individual learning difficulties. Others stress group work for the sake of learning from each other. Teachers of both kinds do not accept each others view and blame each other of rattling off scholastic lessons with no due consideration to participants' needs or squandering the institutes' money. The principal refers to the need for solidarity in

the team, but at the same time he is imposing a minimum group size and refuses volunteers for one-to-one teaching. As an effect of this the rejected part of the team clings to material manifestations of its identity: a private telephone, a desk and a bookcase in a class-room with the precursors name on the door.

Schein (1985, 55) underlines that "consensus on the core mission does not automatically guarantee that the members of the group will have common goals". The same holds for consensus on the means to be used, the criteria in measurement of the results, and new strategies if goals are not being met. This seems to be at hand in the case above.

A contrasting case, is an institute in which as the most important goal "a supply of courses in all villages" is formulated by most teachers and the principal. Some of them have a primary claim for literacy-courses and others for orientation in cultural participation, but everyone endorses the view that from the nature of the course and the group of participants it follows as a matter of course that size and style of working differs.

A promoting factor in this seems to be the fact that teachers with teaching experience in a precursor of ABE have trained their new colleagues who had no specific teaching experience. These new colleagues crossed the borders between types of courses and sections in the team, while teachers of the precursors were not forced to do the same immediately. As an effect of this, sub-teams in accordance with three precursors could be generated without giving rise to conflicts.

Sub-teams with subcultures that fit into a dominant culture, acceptance of differences in the way team members interpret the core mission in operational goals and consensus on divergence in allocation of means and tasks; may be superior to forced homogeneity, as long as these differences do not conflict with the core mission. In merging, a step-by-step integration can be preferable above a forced breaking up of precursors.

6.3. Professional cooperation

In general teachers in ABE have smaller appointments. In 1987, 50% of teachers had an appointment of less than fifteen hours a week (Doets & Huisman, 1988). This and other characteristics of ABE such as providing courses at more locations in a district, involve that school breaks with a considerable part of the team are scarce. This fact underlines the necessity of arranging possibilities to meet each other as colleagues.

Still, one is mostly working on an appropriate consultative structure in the team. Commonly meetings are subdivided in policy matters and issues concerning the content of courses. What policy matters does suffice to inform teachers of a decision and of what issues that need to be discussed is still a problem for some principals. Teachers tend to attach greater importance to discussing course content and would prefer policy matters to take less time. This observation points to a more hierarchical structure that some teachers not even considered at the start of ABE.

The expected continuance of cooperative practices as realized in some precursors is illustrated in some cases. In one institute, teachers in one type of course maintained the meetings they held with colleagues in a larger area, before the introduction of the rule on ABE. These teachers have now formally been divided between several institutes, but they all attach great importance to these meetings. A new appointed colleague recently started participating too. In the interview it appeared that she regarded the teachers meeting in this structure as the actual 'institute.'

In some cases, a similar but larger precursor-area splintered after the introduction of the rule on ABE. Teachers refer to the past constructive meetings with regret. Other cases show how disseminating intensive consultation in the team promotes feelings of trust and team-coherence. In one institute the reconstruction of team meetings was initiated by the teachers of two precursors in view of the mismanagement of the principal. The team took over the actual command till the principal was dismissed. The new appointed principal temporarily counts on this team structure till she has settled in her new job.

The precursor practice of teamteaching was found to be less promising with regard to improving teaching quality by professional communication. Teachers that practice teamteaching in one group seldom discuss each others style directly. Nevertheless, teachers discuss events in their groups: things that went wrong or better than expected and uncertainties they have. Also, they are asking for solutions to practical problems. In ABE (as in other types of education) one is not used to systematic classroom-observations by colleagues. Only when a group is transferred from one teacher to the other, the new teacher comes to make a first acquaintance.

7. Discussion

This paper may have raised more questions than have been answered. A good deal of work has to be done in the process of exploring more general sociological concepts, concepts emerging from the data, and selecting and interpreting indicators.

As for ongoing innovations in the institutes next to or after the phase of merging, data is highly tentative and in some cases incomplete. I made a global distinction in data concerning the organization and data on the curriculum. An interim conclusion is, that the organizational culture is indeed relevant to innovating capacities. Changes in educational content in these seventeen only takes place when the team structure is appropriate. In six cases, promoting factors for improving educational quality can be observed, such as a systematic exchange of knowledge about the course groups some teachers have experience with, and teachers working together at an educational resource bank.

Aside from innovative capacities, in a more global sense several aspects positively related to institutionalization seem to be missing with regard to ABE. Although ABE is being implemented and the process of institutionalization is not yet fully relevant, some problems can be identified already. Miles, Ekholm & Vandenberghe (1987, 37-40) present a list of key variables divided into the characteristics of the innovation (quality, centrality, magnitude and fit), the internal context (organizational culture, structure and press) the external context (fit, stability, environmental press, community support, supporting infrastructure) and the change process (leadership and direction, interaction/participation, mobilization and reinforcement, technical assistance and stabilization).

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